

**Minutes - King County Rural Forest Commission Meeting**  
**Wednesday, January 16, 2008**  
**Preston Community Center, Preston, Washington**

*Commissioners present:* Julie Stangell, Jim Franzel, Doug Schindler, Alex Kamola, Matt Rourke and Ron Baum

*Commissioners absent:* Lee Witter Kahn, Leonard Guss, Doug McClelland and Kevin Buckley

*Ex officio members present:* Randy Sandin and Amy Grotta

*Ex officio members absent:* Marilyn Cope and Brandy Reed

*Staff:* Dave Kimmett, King County Parks; Paul Reitenbach, Department of Development and Environmental Services (DDES); Joelyn Higgins, DDES; Ray Mosher, Business Relations and Economic Development (BRED); Julia Larson, BRED; Kathy Creahan, Farm and Forest Programs Manager; Kristi McClelland, Forester and Linda Vane, Liaison for the Commission

*Guests:* Cindy Spiry, Snoqualmie Tribe and Boyd Norton, WA Dept. of Natural Resources

**Meeting Summary**

*Action Items:*

1. Staff will submit comments and recommendation of the commission as part of the public comment on the public review draft of the Comprehensive Plan Update.
2. Staff will email the RFC a list of the proposed Transfer of Development Rights changes when they become available.

*Minutes:*

Motion 1-0108 That the minutes from the November 2007 meeting be approved with the following change: that Page 4, Paragraph 2, Sentence 4, be changed to read, "Assuming it intends to refer to the less than 20 acre riparian exemption, the Commission does not support it." Also note that Alex Kamola was not present. Approval of the motion was unanimous.

Chair Julie Stangell called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

**Report back on RFC recommendations on the 2008 King County Comprehensive Plan and Shoreline Master Program Updates**

Paul Reitenbach, Manager for the Comprehensive Plan Update, DDES

Kathy passed out a list of the Rural Forest Commission (RFC) comments on the draft Comprehensive Plan (Comp Plan) from the November meeting. Following each item was a note on how the comment was being addressed by the County. For the most part, this was an informational presentation and nearly all of the RFC's recommendations had been incorporated into the Comp Plan. The commission made the following additional recommendations:

The commission had recommended that the significance of the Mount Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest in the forest landscape should be recognized in the Comp Plan. After reviewing

the draft policy developed by staff, Jim Franzel and Doug S. said that the language should be stronger. Jim commented that it is significant that a large percentage of the forest is in wilderness designation. Also important, said Jim, is the Healthy Forests legislation that allows the Forest Service to reinvest revenues from timber harvests back into conservation. Kathy said that she would edit the policy.

Julie asked if the County's 90,000-acre conservation easement on the Snoqualmie Forest is mentioned in the Comp Plan. Kathy read the applicable section in Chapter 3 of the Com Plan and the associated new policy, which reads:

**Policy R 523a.** "King County should conserve working forests and should encourage private forestry through the acquisition of development rights in the Forest Production District. Land acquisition proposals that would remove lands from forest management should be evaluated to ensure that the long-term commercial significance of the Forest Production District is not compromised."

Julie and Doug S. expressed agreement with this new policy to make sure commercially significant forest is not removed from active management when acquired by the County.

With regard to the chapter on the Shorelines Master Program:

Julie recommended and Doug S. concurred that background information regarding the state's Forest and Fish Agreement and WDNr's *Habitat Conservation Plan* should be added before Policy S-526, which states that the County shall require standards greater than or equal to the state forest practices regulations in the Forestry Shoreline Environment.

There was a considerable discussion of the shoreline exemption process and the current version of proposed changes. Randy Sandin said that the County's intention overall is to remove the need for an exemption letter in most of the shoreline jurisdictions. Julie reiterated that the RFC is trying to get away requiring a shoreline exemption on shorelines that are already regulated under the state Forest Practices Act. [In past meetings the RFC recommended that redundancies with the state exemption process be eliminated.] Through discussion it was decided that the language was unclear. Randy said staff would restructure that section of the draft.

Paul Reitenbach turned the presentation over to Darren Greve, manager of King County's Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) Program. Darren introduced nine changes related to the TDR that are being considered for the Comp Plan update. Darren said that the County's recent Buildable Lands report said that the unincorporated rural area has the capacity to take up to 15,000 new dwelling units. The County wants to strengthen the TDR program to pull 25% of those potential units out of the rural area and into the urban area. Doug S. asked that Darren send the proposed policy changes to the commissioners in writing so they can think it through. Darren agreed to make them available online before the end of January [<http://www.metrokc.gov/permits/codes/CompPlan/2008/>].

Darren summarized the nine TDR changes that the County is considering:

- 1) In the public review draft of the Comp Plan, Chapter 3, it is proposed the county require TDR purchases for 50% of the allowed density on land that is added to the Urban Growth Area (UGA) via the 4-to-1 program. In short, this policy links TDR to the 4-to-1 program.
- 2) Institute a pilot program to create Rural Preservation Districts, which would surround strategic Urban Growth Area (UGA) expansion receiving sites with a buffer of properties from which the development rights have been stripped. The intention is to limit the incremental expansion of UGAs, explained Darren. Doug Schindler liked the idea. Julie asked for assurances that as a pilot program the County would limit the places where this would be allowed and not create an automatic approval for every proposed upzone.
- 3) All re-zones to higher density in urban areas enacted by DDES would be made contingent upon developer TDR purchases. Darren explained that currently, certain upzones are approved by DDES without conditions. This policy would require urban upzones to buy TDR credits. This is intended to stimulate demand on the buyer's side, said Darren.
- 4) TDR may be used as the basis for a "carbon credit" in forthcoming county State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) regulations. Because concentrating growth in the UGA reduces rural to urban trips, a carbon mitigation credit would be available along with the purchase of development rights, said Darren.
- 5) Insert enabling language into the Comp Plan that allows TDRs to be use as "traffic concurrency" in rural areas. Darren said that this is intended to address lack of demand by allowing TDR to be used as a transportation currency credit. Ron Baum said that he is concerned that this would result in undesirable traffic congestion in rural areas. Essentially we would be trading less density in long term for traffic problems now, said Ron. There was considerable discussion among the commission members on this proposal, with a recommendation from the RFC that the County should consider the possibilities for unintended consequences.
- 6) Increase the density bonus ceiling beyond 150% in select unincorporated urban TDR receiving areas. Darren said that it is proposed that if a developer fulfills certain conditions such as walkability design, the County will give them double the density bonus of current zoning. Doug S. was concerned that raising density before areas are annexed to adjoining cities will create urban areas that are not consistent with design standards of the new city. Julie said that if you put that density in places like North Bend you are creating new commuters, which is contrary to the intent of TDR.
- 7) King County currently allows accessory dwelling units of up to 1,000 square feet. The proposed change would allow larger accessory dwelling units with TDR in rural areas, said Darren. Ron expressed concerned that this would encourage people to build a big new primary residence in the rural area and convert the old house to accessory dwelling unit.

Julie and Doug S. said that the County should attend to unintended consequences of these proposals and the other commissioners agreed that this policy should be written carefully so as not to open the door to undesirable density in the rural area.

- 8) Darren said that proposed policies No. 8 and 9 are intended to free up supply. He said that at present, RA-10 properties within the Rural Forest Focus Areas (RFFA) are allocated twice as many development credits as are areas outside the RFFAs. He has found that this keeps some RA-10 properties with high quality forest resources/amenities from enrolling in TDR when they are outside the RFFA. Darren said that by allowing RA-10 zoned properties in the RFFA to get twice the credits than now get, this would increase enrollment.
- 9) The final proposal would make RA 2.5 properties eligible as sending sites. Darren said that lot of these properties are Vashon shorelines or around Woodinville. Woodinville would like to do an interlocal agreement with King County to use TDR to preserve rural area outside town, but right now land is not eligible for the program, he said.

In concluding the discussion, Julie said that the RFC would like to have more opportunity for input and to consider changes when they are proposed for the TDR program.

### **Staff Reports**

#### *2008 Financial Disclosure Statements – Linda Vane*

Linda announced that the annual financial disclosure statements will be distributed via email.

#### *Code Changes – Joelyn Higgins*

Joelyn said that the county code has been changed to reduce fees for agricultural buildings in Agricultural Production Districts and the Rural Area. This will be extended to the Forest Production District. The reduced fee will be \$70 per hour.

### **Rural Economic Strategy – Part 1 of Developing Recommendations**

Julia Larson, Office of Business Relations and Economic Development

In the first of two sessions to develop new recommendations for economic activities related to forests, Julia Larson conducted a brainstorming session to identify what is working in terms of economic development and those things are barriers or areas that need improvement.

#### Things that are working

Julie - King County's Forestry Staff and their work with small forest landowners.

WSU King County Extension forest stewardship classes for landowners.

The County is receptive to breaking down barriers to active forest management as evidenced by recent code changes and Comp Plan changes to facilitate forestry.

Amy - Related to forest stewardship planning, through changes in code, the County is starting to give landowners the flexibility to do forestry on large forested residential properties.

Management of King County natural resource lands as working forests.

Alex - Forest Stewardship trainings for owners of small forest lands.  
King County foresters' technical assistance to landowners.

Jim - State Forest Practice Rules are working.

#### Barriers/Areas Where Improvement Is Needed

Julie - There is a lack of availability of infrastructure for very small landowners, such as: operators who are willing to do small thinning jobs, trucks that will handle small loads, small front loaders, mills in close proximity, herbicide applicators, etc. A different subset of contractors is needed for small forest landowners than those that might be used by large industrial landowners.

Amy - Declining interest overall in doing timber harvest among small acreage landowners. (This attitude changes when people take forest stewardship classes.)  
There is a widespread misconception about regulations and the Critical Areas Ordinance (CAO). People think that the CAO means that the 65% of their land that is in native vegetation is "no touch." They do not realize that they can do forestry operations.

Matt - There is no large mill in King County that can be competitive in the Puget Sound region.  
Lack of timber production on federal lands and reduced harvest levels on state lands.  
Lack of operators and equipment able to quickly respond to market opportunities or forest health issues.

Alex - Onerous permitting processes.  
Need to link up infrastructure resources and contractors with landowners and groups that would like to do forest practices, so that the forest stewardship trainings and technical assistance will result in more active forest management.

Ron - Lack of public awareness of timber and non-timber forest products and lack of venues to sell specialty product producers in this area, *e.g.*, a "foresters" market along the lines of a farmers' market.

Jim - The complexities of following National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) is a real challenge as it affects the economies of scale when agencies do a small timber harvest with a lot of public involvement and environmental analysis associated with it.

#### **Suggestions for future agendas**

1. Preston Mill Site tour with someone from the Preston Community.
2. Carbon sequestration in trees, soil and building products.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

#### ***Next meeting***

The next meeting will be held Wednesday, March 19, 2008, at 9:30 a.m. in Preston. The meeting after that will be held on May 21, 2008.

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